

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Latest update: April 18, 2017

Q1. If all the parts of the machine in contact with the floor are in the departure zone, can the machine itself extend beyond the departure zone before it is started up?

Yes.

Q2.1 Is the container the same for everyone or does each team have to bring its own container along?

For the competition, the container will be provided by the organisers (see 3.1.6). The container is a box that would normally hold 5,000 sheets of letter-sized paper measuring 8.5 x 11 inches (21.6 x 27.9 cm), without its lid. **This box is provided** for the challenge and measures 22 cm in height x 45 cm in length x 29 cm in width (± 1 cm). For the beginning of the attempt the team may place the box wherever it wishes inside a circle with a radius of 60 cm formed by the position markers.

Q 2.2 In addition, are there permitted minimum and maximum dimensions for the container?

Yes, as specified in 3.1.6.

Q 2.3 Since each team brings its container, must the container be intact or can it have, for example, a hole in the side, a cut, etc. (in short, any modification that changes the initial physical surface of the container.)?

The container will be provided by the organisers and cannot be modified.

Q3. Are other types of batteries, other than lithium batteries, accepted (for instance, nickel cadmium)?

Yes.

This being said, lithium batteries are not permitted in the machine itself. However, lithium tools to assemble the machine are tolerated.

Q4. The scoring equation has a maximum. This should never happen because it makes perfection possible. The equation has no parameters that can be optimised. What will you do if two teams obtain the maximum score?

In the event of a tie, the time that has elapsed between the beginning of the official attempt and the moment when the last ball is moved will be used to determine the winning team. The advantage will go to the team with the shorter time. (See 2.4.)

Q5. Can an autonomous robot be used if it runs on alkaline batteries (Rule 4.1.)?

Yes.

Q6. Can the box be part of the machine (Rule 4.2)?

No, the container (box) is part of the playing area.

Q7. Can the box be placed in the departure zone (Rule 4.2)?

Yes, the container can be placed in the departure zone as long as it's within a circle inside a circle with a radius of 60 cm formed by the position markers (see 3.1.6.).

Q8. If the machine is made of several separate parts, can one part of the machine be placed in the box before start-up (Rule 4.4)?

Yes, part of the machine can be inside the volume of the container, but it must not be in contact with the container.

Q9. Can the machine extend beyond the playing zone while the balls are being recovered (playing area)?

Yes, but there is no guarantee that there will not be any obstacles outside the surface of the playing area.

Q10. Am I allowed to use materials from building kits like K'NEX to build my machine?

Yes.

Q11. Are we allowed to use a robot?

Yes. It is important to point out that the machine must be autonomous and cannot be remote-controlled.

Q12. If we pick up a ball with its PVC support, will we score; similarly, what if we put them in the box?

Yes, only the balls that are picked up and held in the machine or placed in the container will count for scoring purposes. The supports can be anywhere at the end of the attempt.

Q13. Initially, the machine can only touch the floor in the departure zone (Rule 4.4). Can any part of the machine be located outside the departure zone without touching the floor?

The machine may be composed of several separate parts. However, before start-up, when the team declares itself to be ready, these parts must all, without exception, rest on the surface in the departure zone, (see Rule 4.2). At this specific point in time, these parts may extend beyond the rectangle of the departure zone – but only upwards – and must absolutely rest on the surface of the departure zone. After the machine has been started up, the parts of the machine no longer have to comply with this restriction.

Q14. Before starting up the machine for an official attempt, can it rest on the floor in the departure zone and have components that extend beyond the departure zone (Rule 4.4.)?

Yes, see the answer to Q13.

Q15. If any of the supports located in the playing area end up in the container by accident, will we be penalised?

No.

Q16. Is the playing area provided or can we build our own playing area while complying with the restrictions? Can we bring it with us for the competition?

The playing area at your college is usually supplied by the local competition organisers. During the national finals, practice playing areas will be available and the competition will take place on a playing area prepared by competition officials.

Q17. According to the instructions, we are not allowed to use lithium batteries as a source of energy. Does this instruction apply to all types of batteries or only to lithium batteries for safety reasons?

Only lithium batteries are prohibited. Other types of batteries are allowed.

Q18.1. Can we put a weight of some kind on the recovery bin? A cardboard box, hit by our machine, would perhaps not be able to trigger our ball-holding mechanism.

No.

18.2. Can we use a remote-controlled car, operated with one hand only, to control the accelerator?

No, the machine must be autonomous.

Q19. Can we use an electrical object plugged into a wall outlet by means of extension cords as part of our assembly?

No, the machine must be autonomous.

Q20. Can there be anything else other than the balls in the box at the end of an attempt? For instance, ball supports or a part of our machine?

Yes.

Q21. Are we allowed to attach part of the vehicle to the floor in the departure zone? This anchor spot would remain the same throughout the challenge.

Yes, if you comply with Rule 4.8.

Q22. If the source of energy is not a lithium battery, can we use a robotic base like "Lego Mindstorm" or a similar device?

Yes.

Q24. Are we allowed to recruit sponsors for our robot's design? The rules say we are not allowed to give our robot a company name but would we be allowed to add company "stickers"?

Yes, you can recruit sponsors. However, you may not add any stickers promoting your sponsors to your machine. You may, however, mention your sponsors during your oral presentation about your machine.

Q25. Can the container be positioned on the machine if the container is located in the departure zone within the 60-cm radius?

The machine cannot be in contact with the container at the beginning of the official attempt (see Rule 4.4). However, after it has been started up, and while it is autonomous, the machine can touch the container (see Rule 4.6).

Q26. Given that the box the balls are to be put into is in the middle of the playing area, it can be moved. In contrast, working with the idea of a central pivot, can we place the pivot in the box to hold the box in place?

Yes, a "central pivot" can be used (and will be considered part of the machine), but it must not touch the container between the time a team representative announces that the team is ready and the time the start-up action is performed (see Rule 4.4).

Q27. After start-up, is the machine allowed to move the box by connecting to it in some way? For instance, a part of the machine sticks to the box.

Yes, after the start-up action has been performed (see Rule 4.6).

Q28. Are we allowed to put part of our machine in the container if the latter is in the departure zone?

Yes, part of the machine can be inside the container's volume but it must not be in contact with the container before the start-up action has been performed (see rules 4.4 and 4.6).

Q29. Are the supports attached to the floor or are they simply put in place?

The supports are placed on the floor.

Q30. Can the machine be in the container before the beginning of the official attempt?

Yes, if it doesn't touch the container before the attempt begins (see Rule 4.4).

Q31. Rule 4.7: What is meant by *upwards*? Does this mean the standard plane of the opening must be perpendicular to the floor at all times? Or does the standard plane of the opening simply have to be at an angle of between 1° and 179°?

The opening of the container will be considered facing upwards if, to borrow the terms used in your question, the standard plane of the container's opening is located at an angle within a range of between 45° and 135° (0° and 180° being located along a horizontal axis).

Q32. Can the container leave the central circle during the attempt?

Yes.

(OLD ANSWER) Q33. What colour will the surface of the playing area be?

Black, with ¾ inch-wide self-adhesive white tape.

(NEW REPLY) Q33. What colour will the surface of the playing area be?

Brown, with ¾ inch-wide self-adhesive white tape.

(OLD ANSWER) Q34. What material will be used for the surface of the playing area? (Wood, concrete, ceramic, PVC, etc.)

The surface is made of narrow hardwood boards, painted black. Photos have been posted on the website at <http://scienceontourne.com/le-defi-2017/>

(NEW REPLY) Q34. What material will be used for the surface of the playing area (wood, concrete, ceramic, PVC, etc.)?

Laminate flooring (wood). It is smooth and the joints between the boards are nearly unnoticeable. The floor is perfectly level and flat.

You can view the product here: http://www.canac.ca/en/product/flooring/laminate-flooring/laminate-flooring/cottage-oak-laminate-flooring-8-mm_41506.aspx?page=1054&mgp7=categorie%3d1156%2c1175&filterorder=0%2c0&pnum=3&ovr=true&root=1150&galst=couvre-plancher&unite=001002

Q35. Are the ball supports attached to the floor?

No, they are placed on the floor.

Q36. Hi, I'm in elementary school but may I participate? What kind of invention do we have to make?

Unfortunately, no. The competition is only for college students (professional category) and college staff (amateur category).

Q37. Is it possible to specify or define the maximum boundary of play, in case a ball falls outside the surface?

The machine can recover a ball that leaves the playing area, but there is no guarantee that the space outside the playing area will be free of obstacles.

Q38.1. Can our team have two members instead of three?

Yes.

Q38.2. Are we required to give an oral presentation?

Yes.

Q39.1. What happens if our vehicle goes outside the boundaries of the playing area?

Nothing in particular happens; the machine is allowed to leave the playing area. If there are any balls inside the machine at the end of an attempt, these balls will count to calculate the score. The team can, however, decide to end an attempt if it feels that its machine cannot score any more points.

Q39.2. Do we count the balls that are in the vehicle even if the vehicle is no longer in the playing area or will only the balls in the playing area be counted?

When the official attempt has ended, the balls in the machine and in the box will count for scoring, even if the machine or the box are no longer in the playing area.

Q40.1. Can the start-up action be repeated if it fails the first time?

Yes, as decided by the referee; if for instance, your triggering system were to fail (no mechanism was activated), the referee will invite you to perform your start-up action again.

Q40.2. If so, can it be repeated as often as necessary (or when the 60-second time lapse has ended)?

Yes, but ideally, since Rule 4.5 tells us that you are entitled to *A single action, using one hand only* to start up your machine, this single action should be enough to activate your machine. This action can be repeated if and only if you have experienced a technical problem and the referee has given you permission to start over.

Q40.3. Can the team representative make any adjustments between start-up attempts?

No. Once the team has declared itself to be ready, the only possible action is the start-up action (see rules 4.4, 4.5 and Section 5.7). If an adjustment needs to be made, this could end the attempt underway.

Q40.4. While trying to start the machine, the team's attempt is automatically ended if the team representative touches the machine with both hands? Please provide more details about the start-up method.

After the team has told the referee that it is ready, handling of the machine is limited to the start-up action (see 4.4). This action is described in Rule 4.5. Any other handling of the machine can therefore result in the attempt being ended.

Q41.1. Can the balls be on the machine and in the container at the same time... and thus, earn 6 points per ball?

Yes.

Q41.2. Must the box be in the playing area?

Before the start-up action, the box must be inside the circle with the 60-cm radius formed by the position markers. After the start-up action has been performed, there are no restrictions as to the position of the box.

Q41.3. Can we let the balls roll endlessly or do we have to pick them up after they've gone farther than 30 cm from the playing area?

The balls leaving the playing area that cannot (reasonably) be picked up by the machine will be collected by designated "ball gatherers".

Q42. Concerning the machine we have to build, can we use electrical materials such as a motor or batteries?

Yes.

Q43. If I've understood correctly, higher plastic ball supports will now be accepted for the local and national finals. Could you please tell me the height of the new supports?

Yes, two sizes of polyethylene barb fittings, the type commonly used in plumbing, will be accepted. Their dimensions are as follows:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1.9 cm) in diameter x $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches (7.3 cm) high

OR

- $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1.9 cm) in diameter x $3\frac{5}{8}$ inches (9.3 cm) high

Q44. Rule 5.11 says that the attempt can be interrupted by the participant and the score is counted. Consequently, my machine doesn't have to stop by itself once it has picked up all the balls. And we're allowed to intervene to stop the machine.

Yes.

Q45. Can I push my machine with my hand to start it?

No. This would be against Rule 5.1. A muscular effort in humans is a form of combustion.

Q46. We didn't manage to find ball supports with the exact dimensions (polyethylene barb fittings, the type commonly used in plumbing, with a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch (1.9 cm) diameter and measuring $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches (7.3 cm) in height). Can you tell us the item number for these supports and the name of the store where they are sold?

See Q43. This item is sold at the following stores: RONA and Canadian Tire.

Q47.1. Can a remote control device be used to start up the machine, if it calls for a single action... pushing a button?

Yes.

Q47.2. Is the 60 seconds (or 30) allocated for the attempt deducted from the 3-minute preparation time?

No.

Q48. Further to the answer given to Question 41.1, would the ball count for 6 points if the vehicle is composed of an arm and a recipient at the end of the arm and if at the end of the attempt, only the recipient is located in the volume of the box... in other words, there's no physical contact between the box and the vehicle (either the recipient or the arm or the rest of the vehicle) nor between the box and the ball; the ball would still be on a part of the vehicle while being in the volume of the box?

Yes, the balls will be considered as having been "picked up" and "placed" as stipulated in rules 2.1 and 2.2.

Q49.1 Can you be more specific regarding Rule 2.4, please? What do you mean by *the moment when the last ball is moved*?

A ball is considered *moved*, when it has left its original position. A ball that moves while remaining on its support is considered to have been moved.

Q49.2 Do you mean *the moment when a last ball is removed from its support*?

No. See Q49.1.

Q50. Question 41.1 has already been asked; would it be possible to answer in greater detail? We want to know the definition of *a ball in the container* and *a ball on the machine*. Should a ball in the container not be in contact with the box alone?

A ball is considered to have been *placed* in the container when it is located within the inside volume of the container at the end of the attempt. A ball is considered to have been *picked up* by the machine when it is in contact with the machine at the end of the attempt, without touching the floor. The words *placed* and *picked up* refer to the challenge text, lines 2.1 and 2.2. It is possible for a ball to be considered as having been both *placed* and *picked up* if both conditions are met at the end of the attempt.

Q51. What is the maximum number of points a team can score during an attempt?

The highest score can be obtained when the 22 balls are on the machine (picked up) and in the container (placed) at the same time. Therefore, the highest possible score is 132. In the event of a tie, see Rule 2.4 or Q50.

Q52.1. After having started up the machine, can the container end up on the machine if it still faces upwards?

Yes.

Q52.2. And if so, is a ball placed in the container also considered to be placed on the machine?

No. See Q50.

Q53. Why are lithium batteries not permitted for the machine, but accepted for the tools?

Designing safe circuits for lithium batteries requires particular competencies. For safety reasons and to be fair to all contestants, lithium batteries may not be used for the machine. However, as mentioned in our answer to Q3., the use of commercial tools that run on lithium batteries will be tolerated to assemble the machine.

Q54. I haven't come up with any ideas for the machine; can you give me some ideas?

No.

Q55. A team asked a question that's been posted in the FAQ regarding a rule change (height of the supports). Are there any other changes we should be aware of or is there a modified document that we should have?

The official rules will be updated soon regarding the permitted heights for the ball supports (See Q43.).

Q56.1. Does the robot have to be able to be contained in the two boxes at all times?

No. The machines, the tools and the rest of the technical material must be contained in the two boxes on the evening before the competition when contest officials check to make sure everything complies with the rules up to step 5.3.

Q56.2. During the three-minute preparation time, can we add an arm to the robot that will make it bigger than the two boxes?

Yes, and see Q56.1.

Q57. Can we use double-sided sticky tape (or another kind of tape) to attach part of our machine to the floor? (This supposes that the sticky tape will be stuck to both the machine and the floor.)

Yes, as long as you abide by Rule 4.8. (See also Q21.).

Q58. To be able to score 6 points per ball, is it important for the balls not to be in contact with the box, but be located only inside the perimeter of the box?

To be worth 6 points, a ball must be in contact only with the machine and inside the volume of the box. See also Q50.

Q59.1. With reference to Rule 4.5 and questions Q11, 18.2 and 47.1: The machine cannot be remote controlled, but the start-up action using only one hand can consist of pushing the button of a remote-control device, after which the remote control device may no longer be use. Have we understood correctly?

Yes.

Q59.2. Is the remote-control device considered a part of the machine?

No, in the description regarding the use of a remote-control device provided in Q59.1, the remote-control device is considered to be a permitted tool that may be used to perform the start-up action (see Rule 4.5).

Q59.3. Can the remote control run on lithium batteries?

Yes, as long as you use them as described in Q59.1 since the remote-control device may only be used as a tool. Use of the remote-control device and batteries must, however, comply with the commercial use recommended by the original manufacturer.

Q60.1. May I be on the playing area to perform the start-up action?

Yes.

Q60.2. With reference to Rule 5.12, will we have a new 3-minute period for the second attempt or do we only have whatever time remains in the 3 minutes allocated for the first attempt?

You will only have whatever time remains in the initial 3 minutes allocated for set-up to make any necessary adjustments (rules 5.6.1 to 5.6.4) and to announce to the referee that you're ready to start your second attempt (Rule 5.7).

Q60.3. In Rule 5.12, what do you mean by: "if there is still time remaining in the 3-minute set-up time"?

This means that the time used to perform the actions described in Rule 5.6 (National Final) for the first attempt is subtracted from the 3 minutes the team is given to prepare for both authorised official attempts. So, if the 3 minutes the team has been given to allow them to set up have not been used entirely for the first official attempt, the remaining time can be used to set up (actions described in Rule 5.6) for a second official attempt.

Q61. Is the tape surrounding the departure zone part of the departure zone? In other words, can our machine stand on the 3/4-inch tape surrounding the departure zone?

No, because the tape used to mark the boundaries of the various zones (including the departure zone) is located outside the zones they encompass. Read Rule 3.1.1 again.

Q62. Can I use a combination of short and long ball supports, for instance, long supports on the 100-cm radius and short supports on the 60-cm radius?

No.

Q63. When my machine is in the paper box with the cover closed, the inside face of the cover is not completely supported by the tops of the box sides. There's a space of about 1 cm. Is this accepted?

Yes.

Q64.1. According to the information, to get 6 points per ball, the ball has to touch the vehicle and be in the volume of the box at the same time. This being said, if the container in which the balls are picked up touches the vehicle and the box, but there is no direct contact between the ball and the box, can we get six points per ball?

Yes, as long as the container in which the balls are picked up is inside the container described in Rule 3.1.6 and mentioned in Rule 2.1. The container holding the balls, based on your description, appears, in fact, to be part of the machine itself.

Q64.2. You say, in your answer to question 49.1 that the ball is considered to have been moved if it leaves its original position, the referee will stop the clock at that instant. Can we let our machine finish its work anyway, if we've not exceeded the 60 seconds?

The time you're referring to (and discussed in Q49.1) is not the time set for the official attempt, but the time that will serve to determine the winning team in the event of a tied score for first place (See 2.4).

Q64.3. Does the machine have to stop on its own?

No.

Q65. Are we allowed to have two separate motors (without lithium and without combustion), one of which is started up during the 3-minute preparation time (the one that doesn't power the machine to move about on the floor) and the second that will trigger the official start-up by means of a single operation, as indicated in the rules? Or do we have to start up both motors at the same time using the same "button"?

It's possible, but you have to comply with Rule 4.4. In particular: "When the team tells the referee it is ready for an official attempt, the machine must be stationary..."

Q66. Can there be a mechanism that's already running before we begin our attempt, if this mechanism does not cause the vehicle to move?

Yes. See also Q65.

Q67. At the national finals, will the time taken to place the balls in the vehicle be calculated using a video replay system? How much uncertainty will there be regarding this time?

If two teams were to obtain the same score in a similar lapse of time, video replay will be used to determine the official time. This time will be precise to the tenth of a second. This time will be measured from the beginning of the official attempt until the last ball has been moved.

Q68. Are we allowed to position the box at an angle?

Yes, as long as the box remains within the permitted range of angles described in Q31.

Q69. If I use double-sided sticky tape to attach my vehicle to the floor, I will have to use lighter fluid to remove all traces of the remaining glue. Is this a problem?

Yes. See Rule 4.8.

Q70. Will we be allowed to make a track that the machine will have no choice but to follow? The rules say that everything located in the starting zone is part of the machine and that the machine can be composed of several parts. On the other hand, there's nothing in the text about parts of the machine that might be outside the starting zone. Thus, would the track be considered a part of the machine?

What you're describing is not allowed. Read rules 4.2 and 4.3 again.

Q71. Are the ball supports attached to the floor? We would like to know if they can fall over.

The supports will be placed on the floor in the playing area.

Q72. What does the text we are required to present before the competition have to contain?

Read the evaluation criteria posted on the web site at <http://scienceontourne.com/a-propos/criteres-evaluation/>

Q73. For a ball to be considered placed and picked up, must there not be any contact between the machine and the box or can the machine touch the box without the balls touching the box directly?

The machine can touch the box but the balls may not come into direct contact with the box.

Q74. Can we incorporate a brand name into our machine? It's not a sponsor or a partner; it's simply in keeping with a thematic goal.

No.

Q75. Does the machine absolutely have to fit into the two boxes for the college competition or can it be modified between the college competition and the final competition so that it fits into the two boxes?

Yes. The text following Line 4.9 reads as follows: " The organisers of the local finals can adapt the conditions so they are different from those set for the national final. However, it would be better to comply as much as possible with the rules that will be applied during the national final. The *Science, on tourne!* steering committee is not responsible for any rule-related changes made for the local finals."

Q76. Can my machine be made of several parts which, when taken apart, will fit into the two boxes? And which, of course, will fit into the starting zone?

Yes.

Q77. The text says that steps 5.5 to the end will be repeated for the finals. Will we still have a few minutes off to the side between the qualification attempt and the final attempt to make adjustments to our vehicle?

Yes, the teams entered in the finals will have 5 minutes off to the side before their turn.

Q78. In the photo posted on the CEGEP Garneau competition site, there is an opening in each end of the box, starting half-way up and going to the top. What are the dimensions of these openings?

The container used for the national finals will not have any openings [in its ends].

Q79. Is the surface of the playing area guaranteed to be clean and free of dust or sand that compromise adhesion?

Yes. The playing area will be swept regularly.